

LARCENY-THEFT

DEFINITION

Larceny-theft is the unlawful taking, carrying, leading, or riding away of property from the possession or constructive possession of another. It includes crimes such as shoplifting, pocket-picking, purse-snatching, thefts from motor vehicles, thefts of motor vehicle parts and accessories, bicycle thefts, etc., in which no use of force, violence, or fraud occurs. In the Uniform Crime Reporting Program, this crime category does not include embezzlement, confidence games, forgery, and worthless checks. Motor vehicle theft is also excluded from this category inasmuch as it is a separate Crime Index offense.

TREND

<i>Year</i>	<i>Number of offenses</i>	<i>Rate per 100,000 inhabitants</i>
1998	7,376,311	2,729.0
1999	6,957,412	2,551.4
Percent change	-5.7	-6.5

Comprising 60 percent of the Crime Index total and 68 percent of the property crime total, larceny-theft was estimated at nearly 7 million offenses in 1999. Monthly distribution figures for 1999 demonstrate that larceny-thefts occurred most often in August and least often in February.

Table 2.27

Larceny-theft by Month					
Percent distribution, 1995-1999					
Month	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999
January	7.9	7.8	8.0	8.4	7.8
February	7.1	7.5	7.2	7.5	7.2
March	8.1	7.9	8.0	8.2	8.1
April	7.8	8.0	8.0	8.1	8.0
May	8.5	8.6	8.4	8.4	8.4
June	8.6	8.6	8.6	8.6	8.7
July	9.1	9.3	9.2	9.0	9.1
August	9.4	9.2	9.1	9.0	9.2
September	8.5	8.4	8.5	8.4	8.5
October	8.8	8.8	8.8	8.5	8.7
November	8.1	7.8	7.9	7.8	8.1
December	8.1	8.1	8.3	8.2	8.3

The Nation's most populous region, the South, accounted for 41 percent of the larceny-theft total in 1999. The Midwest accounted for 23 percent of the Nation's larceny-thefts; the West represented 22 percent; and the Northeast recorded 14 percent. (See Table 3.)

A decrease was registered in the number of incidents of larceny-theft in each of the country's geographic regions. The Western States reported a 9-percent drop in this offense; the Midwestern States recorded a 7-percent decrease; the Northeastern States noted a 5-percent decline; and Southern States reported a 4-percent drop. (See Table 4.)

In 1999, larceny-thefts decreased 6 percent nationwide when compared to the 1998 figure. Cities as a whole, suburban counties, and rural counties all reported drops of 6 percent. Among city population groups, those with 25,000 to 99,999 inhabitants showed the greatest decline in larceny-theft, 7 percent. (See Table 12.)

An examination of the long-term national trends indicated a decline of 13 percent when comparing 1999 larceny-theft totals to 1995 figures and a decrease of 12 percent when comparing 1999 totals to those in 1990. (See Table 1.)

Rate

When compared to the previous year's data, the 1999 larceny-theft rate of 2,551 per 100,000 population represented a 7-percent drop. The rate fell 16 percent below 1995 figures and 20 percent lower than 1990 rates. Rates for the Nation's community types revealed 3,151 offenses of larceny-theft per 100,000 inhabitants in cities outside metropolitan areas, 2,727 in metropolitan areas, and 1,005 in rural counties. (See Tables 1 and 2.)

All four geographic regions reported declines in the 1999 larceny-theft rate per 100,000 inhabitants. The West

showed a 10-percent drop, the Midwest a 7-percent decline, and both the Northeast and the South reported 5-percent decreases. With respect to larceny-theft rates for 1999, the South reported a rate of 2,935 larceny-thefts per 100,000 population. The West registered a rate of 2,533. The Midwest experienced a rate of 2,517, and the Northeast recorded 1,901 per 100,000 inhabitants. (See Table 4.)

Nature

The average value of property stolen in 1999 as a result of larceny-theft was \$678, up from the 1998 value of \$632. The aggregate loss to victims, when applying the average value to the estimated number of larceny-thefts nationally, was over \$4.7 billion for the year. This estimated dollar loss is considered conservative since many offenses in the larceny category never come to law enforcement attention, particularly if the value of the stolen goods is small. Losses over \$200 accounted for 39 percent of reported larceny-thefts, and losses under \$50 comprised 38 percent. The remaining 23 percent involved losses ranging from \$50 to \$200.

By type of larceny-theft, losses of goods and property reported stolen as a result of thefts from buildings averaged \$1,015; from motor vehicles, \$693; and pocket-picking and thefts of motor vehicle accessories, both averaged losses of \$451. Purse-snatching resulted in an average loss of \$392, thefts from coin-operated machines, \$376 and thefts of bicycles, \$338. Losses from shoplifting averaged \$165. (See Table 23.)

Thefts of motor vehicle parts, accessories, and contents accounted for the largest segment of larceny-theft, 36 percent. Thefts from buildings and shoplifting both constituted 14 percent, and thefts of bicycles, 5 percent. The remainder of larceny-thefts were attributed to pocket-picking, purse-snatching, thefts from coin-operated machines, and all other types of larceny-thefts. Table 2.28 provides the distribution of larceny-theft by type and geographic region.

Table 2.28

Larceny Analysis by Region					
Percent distribution, 1999					
Type	United States Total	North-eastern States	Mid-western States	Southern States	Western States
Total ¹	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Pocket-picking	.6	1.9	.3	.4	.5
Purse-snatching	.6	1.1	.5	.4	.5
Shoplifting	14.4	14.4	13.0	13.3	16.6
From motor vehicles (except accessories)	25.7	23.9	23.9	23.9	29.7
Motor vehicle accessories	10.4	8.1	12.1	9.8	11.3
Bicycles	4.7	5.6	5.2	3.8	5.1
From buildings	13.6	18.2	15.3	11.5	13.2
From coin-operated machines	.7	.5	.5	.8	.7
All others	29.3	26.3	29.2	36.1	22.3

¹ Because of rounding, the percentages may not add to total.

Figure 2.15

Larceny-theft
Percent Change
from 1995

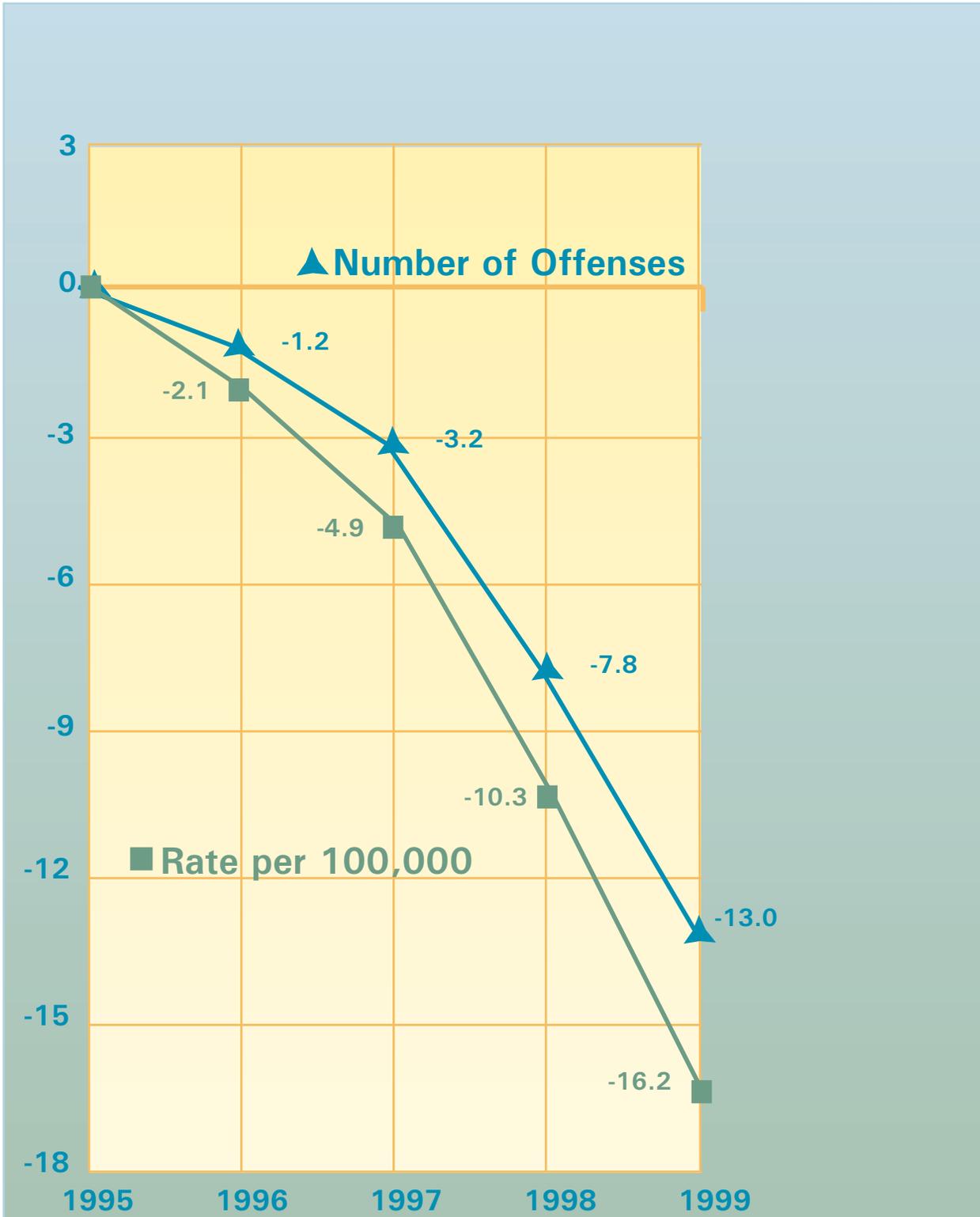


Figure 2.16

Larceny-theft Categories Percent Change from 1995

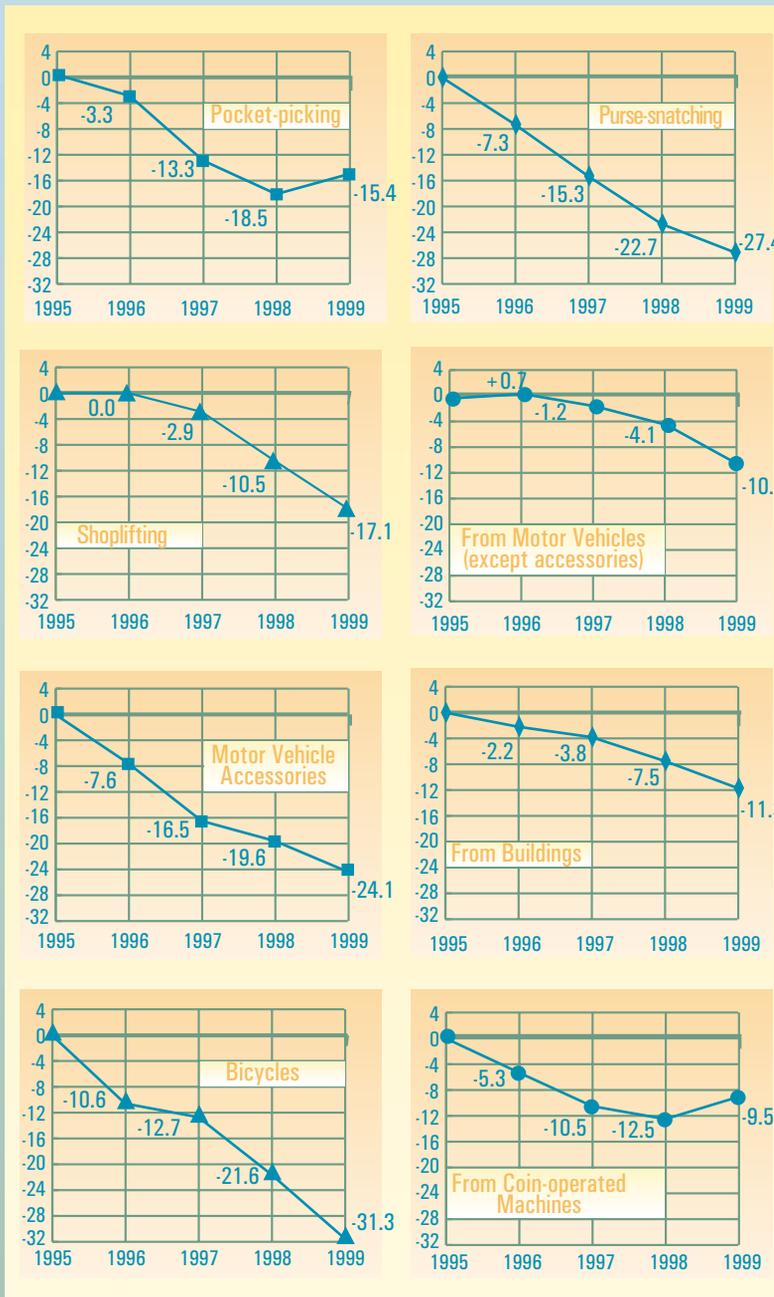
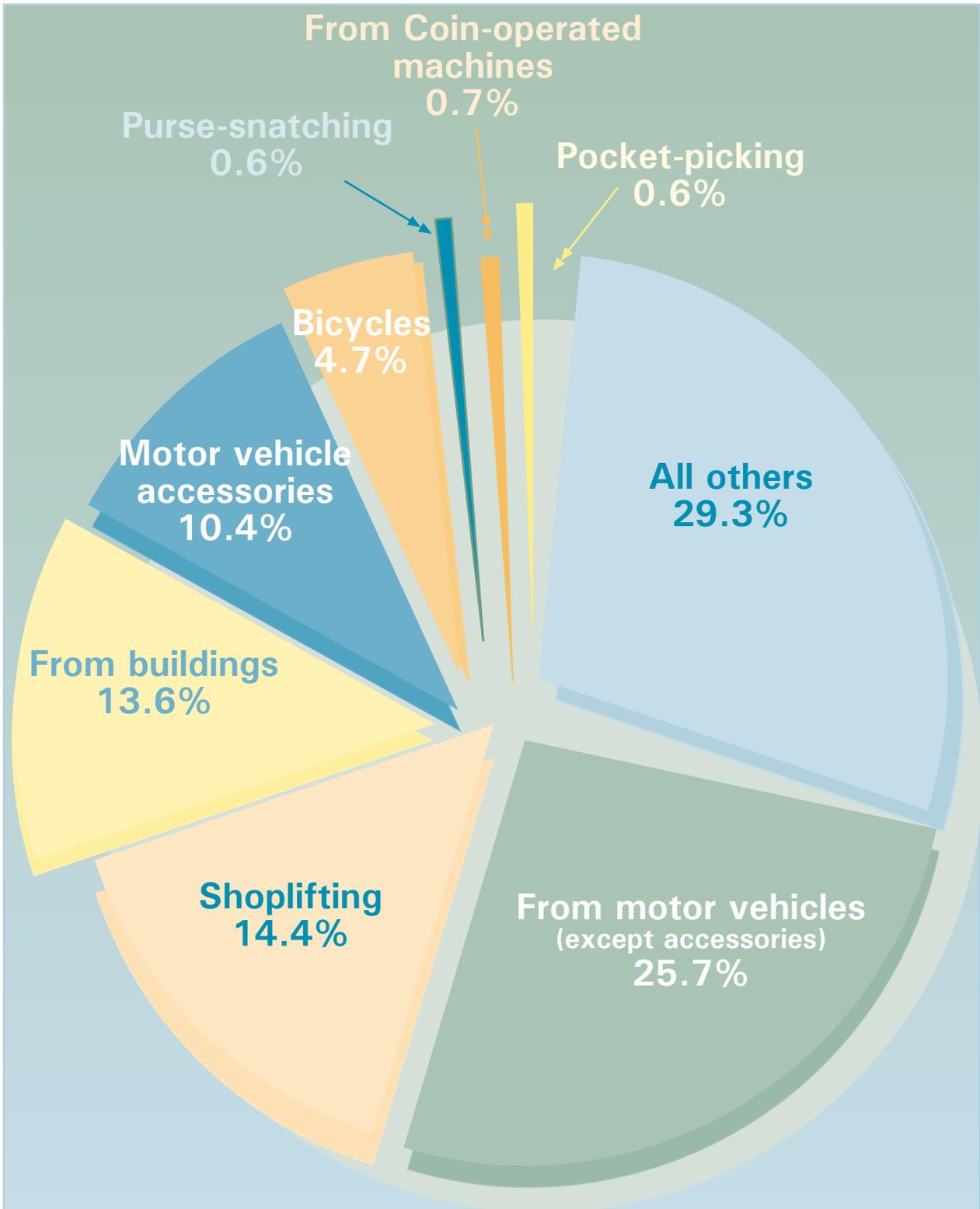


Figure
2.17

Larceny-theft
Percent Distribution 1999



Law Enforcement Response

In 1999, the national clearance rate for larceny-theft offenses was 19 percent. By community type, cities with populations from 10,000 to 24,999 accounted for the highest clearance rate, 23 percent. Law enforcement in the Nation's cities collectively cleared 20 percent of larceny-thefts, and those in rural counties recorded an 18-percent clearance rate. Law enforcement agencies in suburban counties reported a 17-percent clearance rate.

A review of the four regions reveals law enforcement agencies in the Northeast cleared 21 percent of reported larceny-theft offenses in 1999. Those in the other three regions, the Midwest, the South, and the West, each cleared 19 percent. (See Table 26.)

Larceny-theft clearances involving juveniles (persons under age 18), both nationally and in the Nation's cities collectively, were recorded at 23 percent. Juveniles comprised 21 percent of larceny-theft clearances in suburban counties, and 18 percent in rural counties. Cities with populations of 25,000 to 99,999 inhabitants showed the greatest juvenile involvement in larceny-theft with 26 percent.

During 1999, the number of persons arrested for larceny-theft fell 9 percent in comparison to the previous year's data. Arrests of males and females declined 10 percent and 8 percent, respectively. Arrests of juveniles dropped 10 percent during this same period, and arrests of adults decreased 9 percent.

The 5-year trend, 1995 to 1999, revealed that larceny-theft arrests declined 19 percent. The number of adult arrests decreased 18 percent during this timespan, and arrests of persons under the age of 18 fell 23 percent. Arrests of males were 22 percent lower when comparing 1999 totals to 1995 levels, and arrests of females were down 14 percent.

Larceny-theft accounted for 52 percent of arrests for all Crime Index offenses reported to law enforcement in 1999. Seventy-two percent of all arrests for property crimes were attributed to larceny-theft. Of those individuals arrested for larceny-theft, 46 percent were persons under 21 years of age, and 31 percent of the arrestees were under 18. Females were arrested for this offense more often than for any other and comprised 36 percent of larceny-theft arrestees.

Of the total number of persons arrested for larceny-theft offenses, 66 percent were white, 31 percent were black, and the remaining 3 percent were all other races.